



FACTSHEET

DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES



Neighborhood Networks centers make a positive impact in America's communities.

Reasons to Start a Neighborhood Networks Center

Invest in your community's future by helping residents connect with the tools and training they need to succeed in the 21st century. Neighborhood Networks centers provide computer and Internet access as well as job-skills training to low- and moderate-income residents of HUD insured and assisted housing. Centers can also create strong partnerships within the community and decrease a property's vacancies by increasing its marketability. Join the growing number of centers located throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and let Neighborhood Networks help you deliver technology access to your community's families.

Who benefits from Neighborhood Networks centers?

Residents. Neighborhood Networks center programs promote self-sufficiency and job-skills development and provide numerous other services that benefit residents. Services can include the following:

- Technology training and access.
- Education.
- Job training and placement.
- Healthcare and childcare services.
- Microenterprise development.
- Transportation.
- Social services.

Property owners and managers. Services provided by a Neighborhood Networks center can increase a property's marketability. Centers provide many benefits to property owners and managers, such as the following:

- Making properties more competitive, lowering vacancy rates, and stabilizing tenancy.
- Helping to build lasting community relationships through partnerships with local businesses.
- Increasing residents' levels of self-sufficiency, which in turn ensures prompt payment of rent as well as a greater sense of pride in their community.

Partners. Forming a partnership with a Neighborhood Networks center can demonstrate an organization's commitment to strengthening its community. By forming a partnership with a center, local businesses, agencies, and nonprofit groups can achieve the following:

- Help train a labor force with skills that meet evolving needs.
- Strengthen community relations.
- Increase awareness of the organization within the community.
- Affect the community's economic health and vitality.

Communities. When residents prosper, so do their communities. By equipping people with the skills to participate in the information age, Neighborhood Networks is preparing them to take a more active role in society.



How can I start a Neighborhood Networks center?

A successful Neighborhood Networks center is grounded in good planning. Follow these five basic steps to create a new center:


- **Involve residents in the planning process.** Residents who help plan a center become invested in its future success. Invite residents to organize a steering committee.
- **Conduct an assessment.** Have residents work together to identify their community's educational and employment needs through interviews and surveys. Residents can also assess other neighborhood institutions that could serve as center partners and resources.
- **Design programs.** By working with the residents' steering committee, you can make informed decisions about possible program offerings and how local partners can contribute.
- **Identify the center's operational needs.** Determine needs for staffing, space, computer hardware and software, insurance, furniture, telephone lines, security, and financial requirements. Prepare a budget, including projected income and operating expenses.
- **Draft a START business plan.** Identify financial plans and day-to-day management of the center, including programs and activities to be offered. The business plan must be submitted to, and

approved by, the local HUD office for funding purposes. Use the Strategic Tracking And Reporting Tool (START) on the Neighborhood Networks Web site to help you in this process.

What is START?

START is an online business-planning resource for both new and established centers. The tool helps centers define their mission, lay the framework for center growth and sustainability, prepare a budget, and identify the steps needed to achieve center goals.

START can perform some calculations and prepare estimates to help you plan your program. When you finish the START process, you will have completed a business plan, which is a HUD requirement for obtaining Neighborhood Networks center status. Many sources of public and private funding also require you to submit a business plan with a grant application.

If you are unable to complete the initial registration form or have questions at any point in the START process, please call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll free at (888) 312-2743 and press "1" for technical assistance. Your local HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator is also a key resource through all phases of the business-planning process. A list of Neighborhood Networks Coordinators by state can be found on the Web site, www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. 

For more information, contact:

**U.S. Department of Housing
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Copies of this fact sheet are available in Spanish and can be requested from the Neighborhood Networks toll-free information center at (888) 312-2743.